

Partita Traverse for Flute Solo

after J. S. Bach

Peter McKenzie Armstrong

1993, 2011

Music engraving by LilyPond 2.12.3--www.lilypond.org

EDITION NOTES

This is a second edition, after the original of 1993. Its pitches and durations are unchanged. Other scoring aspects, however, are here significantly more explicit: movement 1 is supplied with shifting (rather than no) time signatures; movements 2 & 3 have respecified articulation and phrasing; movement 4 tempo changes are better detailed; and the Composition/Performance Notes are rewritten.

Hardcopy. This file is to be printed in landscape mode on 11" x 17" card stock, that then trimmed to a width of 13" and wire-bound.

COMPOSITION NOTES

Discovered by Karl Straub in 1917, an 18C copyists's manuscript titled *Partita solo pour la flute traversiere* appears to be Sebastian Bach's solitary work for unaccompanied flute. Composed circa 1720, its movements represent with one exception the standard core of the Baroque solo suite. Its instrument as prescribed is, not the end-blown default "flute" of that day (a recorder), but the cross-blown then recently evolved from the fife of military use.

I have set about to refashion Bach's *Partita* by re-imagining impacts for the word "*traversiere*" (beyond its reference to the perpendicular breath flow identifying this instrument). They include: in the title, "traverse" re-positioned to modify the composition *per se*; in movements 1 and 4, lateral sort, and imposition of a pitch axis; in movement 2, perpendicular twist incarnated as a pitch-vs-time parameter swap; and in movement 3, melody positing as its opposite (continuo). The piece is meant for performance immediately following its antecedent. The music was generated as follows.

Expansion. The Allemande's beat-beamed quadruplets, each taken as intervallically fixed, were externally reordered via an ascending sort of their pitch spans. Each was then transposed to set one extreme pitch at E5 (a 10th above Middle C) with the group fanning upward or downward according to the melodic direction of its 2nd-4th members. The resulting sequence radiates in alternating direction from focal point to outer limit – by chance, from the Allemande's initial to final tones.

Star Finder. Corrente measures 2-3 were input to an algorithm of mine that, given the X/Y dot-graph coordinates for a metered pitch sequence, rotates its pattern through half-circle, tracking the attack order swaps thereby forced and upward-grading each impacted attack time vector. Given a backward start without further intervention, this process evolved towards and ended with Bach's original measures, as though "bound and determined" to get these right. The movement is named after Prof. Whitney's little astronomical device, whose traversal so well models the algorithm.

[Unaccompaniment]. Hearing Bach's Sarabande, I wish occasionally for more harmonic definition. As the wish remains frustrated I offer in revenge this alternate, a "continuo without melody". It is textured in fact as two melodies (one to be pre-taped) and maximizes periodicity of harmony and phrasing. The movement is best heard as accompanying the listener's silent(!) recollection of the Sarabande itself, which it almost fits.

Collapse. Each of the Bouree's beat-beamed note groups was taken to represent that group's mean pitch (reckoned as the sum-of-pitches divided by number-of-notes). First sorted by metrical type, the groups were then reoriented to the focal E of movement 1 through a further nested sort: by mean pitch as higher or lower than the focus; by shrinking mean-to-focus interval. Thus this work's initial metaphor, radiation, was reversed. The music now instead backs into its point of origin – in a spiralling, sputtering image less of doom than of laughter.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

(Throughout). Tempi should approximate player's preference for the corresponding Bach movements. All slurs define articulation, i.e., their last note is to be detached from the next event.

Expansion. Stem direction identifies two voices, which alternate at the barlines. Articulation is to be quasi-legato within, but detached between, these voice segments. Hollow noteheads do not impact rhythm, but flag increments of pitch radiation from the initial E. Volume should vary note-discretely as the pitch distance from this focus ('pp', with the final A 'ff'). All in a character somehow sagacious.

for Jonathan Baumgarten

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Expansion

6

12

19

25

30

34

41

Star Finder. Playing must convey a growingly desperate struggle to get Bach's original bars 2 & 3 right. Every measure duplicates its just prior version except for a confusing two-note swap. In the full phrases (2 bars '**f**'), hazard assertively; in half phrases (1 or more bars '**p**') regroup uncertainly. Within the bar, tempo should be inflexible, vividly syncopating, with 8th-notes staccato. Apostrophes signal hesitations of varying length. The key is again A minor, here with register-specific signature.

Star Finder

8-measure system (measures 1-8):
Measure 1: *f* (forte)
Measure 2: *p* (piano)
Measure 3: *f* (forte)

8-measure system (measures 9-16):
Measure 9: *p* (piano)
Measure 10: *f* (forte)

8-measure system (measures 17-24):
Measure 17: *p* (piano)
Measure 18: *f* (forte)
Measure 19: *p* (piano)
Measure 20: *f* (forte)
Measure 21: *p* (piano)

8-measure system (measures 25-32):
Measure 25: *f* (forte)

8-measure system (measures 33-40):
Measure 33: *p* (piano)

8-measure system (measures 41-48):
Measure 41: *f* (forte)

8-measure system (measures 49-56):
Measure 49: *p* (piano)
Measure 50: *ff* (fortissimo)
Measure 51: *pp* (pianissimo)

[Unaccompaniment]. Ideally, the lower part is to have been pre-recorded in the performance hall by the soloist. Logistics may require recording elsewhere, or even instead commandeering a second flautist. Against whichever of these in concert, the soloist plays the upper part. The result must evoke the character of continuo: chordal accompaniment to the (absent) Sarabande, in a tempo spacious enough to accommodate. Apostrophes demarcate phrases. Dotted half-notes get separate breaths.

[Unaccompaniment]

Musical score for Unaccompaniment, measures 1-43. The score is written in treble clef, 3/4 time, and key of D major. It consists of eight staves of music. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line at measure 43.

Measures 1-6: Initial chords and a half note G4.

Measures 7-12: A series of eighth and quarter notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in measure 10.

Measures 13-18: Continuation of the eighth and quarter note pattern, with a half note G4 in measure 16.

Measures 19-24: Features a half note G4 in measure 19, a half note F#4 in measure 20, and a half note E4 in measure 21. Measures 22-24 continue with eighth and quarter notes.

Measures 25-30: Continuation of the eighth and quarter note pattern, with a half note G4 in measure 28.

Measures 31-36: Continuation of the eighth and quarter note pattern, with a half note G4 in measure 34.

Measures 37-42: Continuation of the eighth and quarter note pattern, with a half note G4 in measure 40.

Measure 43: Final measure, ending with a double bar line.

Dynamic markings: *sf* (sforzando) at measure 37, and *ritenuto* (ritardando) at measure 43.

Collapse. In this inward sweeping towards E5 from above and below, the player must make the most of abruptness. It applies in several ways: sudden pattern shifts belying metric consistency, crowded contrary articulations, and especially an underlying erratically unstable tempo. Details of articulation are to be rudely exaggerated, with a character from jaunty to raucous depending on the degree of felt surprise.

Collapse

3/4

p

poco cresc.

3

5

f

6

mf

ritenuto

7

p

tempo

poco rall.

8

mp

tempo

9

pp

cresc.

10

molto ritardando

12

f

tempo subito

14

rallentando

tempo sub.

f

sf

lunga

sfz

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piece titled 'Collapse'. It is written for a single melodic line in treble clef. The score consists of 14 measures, divided into four systems of four measures each. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first system (measures 1-4) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, marked 'poco cresc.'. The second system (measures 5-8) starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-forte (*mf*) section marked 'ritenuto'. The third system (measures 9-12) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, marked 'tempo', followed by a mezzo-piano (*mp*) section marked 'poco rall.' and then 'tempo'. The fourth system (measures 13-14) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, marked 'molto ritardando', followed by a forte (*f*) section marked 'tempo subito'. The final measure (14) is marked 'rallentando' and features a long note marked 'lunga' with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*sfz*) dynamic.

